Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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R 281736Z MAY 77
FM USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3812
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 USUN 1711

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, IS, US
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR HERZOG'S VIEWS ON THE ISRAELI SCENE

1. SUMMARY: HIGHLIGHTS OF UN PERM REP HERZOG'S ASSESSMENT OF THE ISRAELI SCENE ARE : A) THE ELECTORATE WANTED TO PUNISH THE ALIGHMENT, NOT BRING LIKUD INTO POWER; B) THE OFFER TO DAYAN REFLECTS BEGIN'S LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN HIS LUKUD ASSOCIATES; C) GIVEN THE PUBLIC UPROAR AGAINST DAYAN, BEGIN CAN NOW OFFER THE FM POST TO YADIN WHO VERY MUCH WANTS IT; D) BEGIN PROBABLY WILL REACH AGREEMENT WITH THE DMC; E) A LIKUD-DMC-NRP COALITION WILL BE READY TO GO TO GENEVA ("BEGIN HAS ALREADY WRITTEN HIS SPEECH"); F) YADIN, WEIZMAN AND SHARON HAVE SAID PUBLICLY THAT THEY ARE PREPARED TO TALK TO AFAFAT; G) THE COALITION WILL OFFER MAJOR CONCESSIONS RE SINAI AND GOLAN TO PUT OFF PRESSURES RE THE WEST BANK; AND H) US PRESSURE ON BEGIN WOULD MAKE LIKUD EVEN MORE ENTRENCHED IN HARDLINE POSITIONS.
END SUMMARY.

2. IN DISCUSSION AT HERZOG'S REQUEST WITH USUN OFFICER HIRSCH ON MAY 27, ISRAELI UN PERM REP CHAIM HERZOG ANALYZED THE ELECTION RESULTS, COALITION PROSPECTS, AND IMPLICATIONS OF A BEGIN GOVERNMENT FOR RESUMPTION OF ARAB-
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ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS AND FOR US-ISRAELI RELATIONS.

3. THE ELECTION- HERZOG BELIEVES THAT THE ISRAELI PUBLIC VOTED AGAINST THE LABOR ALIGNMENT BUT WAS SURPRISED TO FIND THAT IT HAD BROUGH LIKUD IN. THE ALIGNMENT FOR ITS PART HAD LOST TOUCH WITH THE PUBLIC AND SERIOUSLY UNDERESTIMATED IT ALIENATION AND ANGER. AS IN MANY OTHER

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COUNTRIES, THERE HAS BEEN A GENERAL SHIFT TO THE CONSERVATIVE PARTIES IN ISRAEL. MANY SECULAR VOTERS SUPPORTED THE NRP WHILE THE ARABS VOTED FOR A WIDE SPECTRUM OF ZIONIST PARTIES INCLUDING LIKUD AND THE NRP. THEY, AS MUCH AS JEWISH VOTERS, HAD BEEN AFFECTED BY INFLATION AND WERE FED UP WITH THE LABOR ALIGNMENT'S PERFORMANCE.

4. BEGIN AND DAYAN-BEGIN HAS OFFERED DAYAN THE FOREIGN MINISTERSHIP NOT ONLY TO STRENGTHEN THE INTERNATIONAL REPUTION OF THE NEXT GOVERNMENT, BUT ALSO OUT OF CONCERN ABOUT THE LIMITED LEADERSHIP QUALITIES OF HIS LIKUD ASSOCIATES. DAYAN'S WILLINGNESS TO ABANDON THE LABOR PARTY IMMEDIATELY AFTER BEING REELECTED ON ITS LIST WAS SHEER OPPORTUNISM. (HERZOG HAS BEEN A SHARP CRITIC OF DAYAN FOR MANY YEARS, E.G., IN HIS BOOK ON THE 1973 WAR.) GIVEN THE PUBLIC UPROAR, IT WAS DOUBTFUL THAT DAYAN WOULD ACTUALLY BECOME FOREIGN MINISTER.

5. COALITION NEGOTIATIONS- IF DAYANA WITHDRAWS, THE WAY IS OPEN TO FORM A LIKUD-NRP-DMC COALITION. BEGIN AND YADIN HAVE A STRONG INTEREST IN REACHING AN ACCOMMODATION AND THEIR DIFFERENCES ARE RECONCILABLE, AT LEAST FOR THE PURPOSE OF FORMING A GOVERNMENT. LIKUD COULD PROMISE ELECTORAL REFORM AT THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION. ON FOREIGN POLICY, LIKUD AND THE DMC COULD AGREE TO A PLEBISCITE IF AND WHEN AN AGREEMENT WITH JORDAN INVOLVING THE WEST BANK IS REACHED--A DEVICE SIMILAR TO THAT USED BY MEIR AND RABIN TO BRING THE NRP INTO THEIR COALITIONS. A CENTER-RIGHT COALITION,
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IF IT IS FORMED, WOULD BE QUITE STABLE EVEN IF BEGIN STEPPED DOWN LATER ON. THE LIKUD HAS BEEN WAITING MANY YEARS TO COME TO POWER, AND DEFECTIONS FROM WITHIN AT AN EARLY DATE WOULD BE UNLIKELY. AS FOR THE ELIGNMENT, ITS PROBLEMS WILL CONTINUE. RABIN AND PERES NOW WILL QUARREL OVER WHICH OF THEM WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEBACLE. PERES ALSO HAS BEEN HURT BY DAYAN'S QUICK ACCEPTANCE OF BEGIN'S OFFER.

6. ARAB-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS- HERZOG BELIEVES THAT A LIKUD-NRP-DMC GOVERNMENT WOULD BE READY TO GO TO GENEVA LATER THIS YEAR. BEGIN LOOKS FORWARD TO PRESENTING HIS CASE DIRECTLY TO ARAB LEADERS. BEYOND SPEECHMAKING, ISREAL ALSO WOULD BE READY TO TAKE PART IN WORKING GROUPS ON SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE. IN ORDER TO DEFLECT PRESSURES FOR CONCESSIONS ON THE WEST BANK, BEGIN PROBABLY WOULD BE READY TO OFFER CONCESSIONS IN THE SINAI AND GOLAN HEIGHTS BEYOND THOSE CONTEMPLATED BY THE ALIGNMENT. HERZOG ALSO RECALLED

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THAT YADIN, WEIZMAN AND AHARON HAVE STATED PUBLICLY
THEIR REDISNESS IN PRINCIPLE TO TALK TO ARAFAT. (IT
SHOULD BE NOTED THAT WEIZMAN AND AHARON DID SO, NOT BECAUSE
THEY BELIEVED THAT PLO-ISRAEL NEGOTIATIONS WOULD RESOLVE
THE PALESTINE PROBLEM, BUT TO ILLUSTRATE THE IRRELEVANCE
OF THE ISSUE OF TALKING TO ARAFAT TO PEACE PROSPECTS.)
HERZOG ADDED THAT IN HIS VIEW THE PLO WAS NO LONGER
A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR, AND THAT IT HAD LOST SUPPORT BOTH
ON THE WEST BANK AND IN ARAB CAPITALS. HE CITED A RECENT
JAPANESE POLL IN WHICH WEST BANKERS HAD SAID THEY DID
NTO WANT THE PLO AND PALESTINIANS IN REFUGEE CAMPS IN
LEBANON SAID THEY WANTED TO RE-SETTLE IN LEBANON, NOT
RETURN TO THE WEST BANK.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 USUN 1711

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7. US-ISRAELI RELATIONS- HERZOG SAID THAT IT WOULD BE
A MISTAKE FOR THE US TO SEEK TO MOVE THE NEGOTIATING
PROCESS FORWARD BY PUTTING PRESSURE ON BEGIN. THERE IS
A STREAK OF MASOCHISM IN ISRAELI LEADERS AND BEGIN WOULD
FIND STRONG SUPPORT IN ISRAEL FOR DIGGING IN AGAINST
SUCH PRESSURE WHILE PRESENTING HIMSELF AS THE
AGGRIEVED PARTY. INSTEAD, THE US SHOULD TREAT BEGIN
AS A STATESMAN AND ENTER INTO AN IN-DEPTH SUBSTANTIVE
DIALOGUE WITH HIM. ONCE AT GENEVA, THE NEGOTIATING
PROCESS WOULD BE STATED, IMAGINATION WOULD COME INTO
PLAY, AND IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO MOVE AHEAD.

COMMENT: HERZOG, A MEMBER OF PERES' RAFI GROUP, IS
NO HAPPIER WITH THE ELECTION RESULT THAN ARE OTHER
MEMBERS OF THE ALIGNMENT. HIS ANALYSIS, IN ADDITION
TO REFLECTING THE SUPPORT ANY AMBASSADOR ABROAD GIVES TO

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HIS PRIME MINISTER TO BE, IS INTENDED TO CONVINCE US NOT TO JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE THRUST OF ISRAELI FOREIGN POLICY. THE ISRAELI UN MISSION WAS FURIOUS AT WALDHEIM'S INSTANT CRITICISM AND DARK FORECAST, AND DISMAYED BY COVERAGE IN TIME AND NEWSWEEK HIGHLIGHTING BEGIN'S TERRORIST PAST AND PRESENT INTRANSIGENCE. IN CONTRAST TO RABIN, HERZOG WELCOMED THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENTS OF MARCH 9 AND 16 WITH THEIR EMPHASIS ON THE NATURE OF
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PEACE; HE ACKNOWLEDGES THAT THE ISRAELI PRESS, PARTICULARLY THE RIGHTWING AFTERNOON PAPERS, PURPOSELY CREATED A NEAR-HYSTERICAL RESPONSE TO THE PRESIDENT'S REMARKS.
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